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ABSTRACT

Findings of a 1992 survey that examined Oregon educators' perceptions of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, a law designed to bring about fundamental change and radical restructuring in public education, are presented in this journal article. Data were derived from questionnaires that were mailed to 2,140 teachers and 120 building-level administrators from 22 school districts, and from interviews conducted with 30 survey respondents. Findings indicate that much ambiguity surrounds the act's precise meaning and implications, resulting in educators' uncertainty about their role as interpreters of the law. However, educators may be more willing to change if they perceive the ideas themselves to be educationally sound; if they are able to adapt the broad policy framework of the mandate to their particular situation; if there is sufficient clarity about their role expectations; if there is reasonable assurance that the political climate will be stable enough for the mandates to remain in force long enough to be implemented thoroughly; and if they are given the resources of money, time, and expertise in a manner that enables them to develop and sustain the internal capacity for change. Twelve tables are included. (LMI)

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OREGON SCHOOL STUDY COUNCIL

Volume 33, Number 3

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Radical State Legislation and School Restructuring: Oregon Educators' Reactions to the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century

By David T. Conley, Paul Goldman, and Diane M. Dunlap

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This article* discusses findings from an October 1992 survey of how Oregon educators perceive the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, a law designed to bring about fundamental change and radical restructuring in public education. We use the results of a large survey to describe and discuss how teachers and administrators are interpreting the law and how they plan to respond to it. Further, we explore how issues of policy implementation may be affected by a piece of legislation that mandates radical changes in public education.

Preview of Findings

- 10 percent of Oregon's educators say they know a lot about the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century. Ninety-six percent believe it is intended to restructure education.
- 6 percent think the act will be implemented "as-is." Eighty-eight percent think the Certificate of Initial Mastery will be implemented.
- 83 percent think lack of funding will impede implementation.
- 92 percent think time for staff development is crucial to implementation.
- 95 percent think they personally will have to change.
- 86 percent believe Alternative Learning Centers will improve student learning.

As educators and policy researchers, we are especially interested in the following questions: Can a state bring about radical restructuring of its public education system through a program of comprehensive legislation? Can state governments legislate radical educational restructuring? How are those affected by radical reform legislation reacting to and making meaning of such legislation?

Radical educational reform and restructuring have been initiated by several state governments. Kentucky, for example, has begun to implement legislation to redesign its public education system from top to bottom (Harp 1991, Steffy 1992). Across the border to the north, British Columbia has begun a similar effort (Anderson 1992).

Other states are mandating educational outcomes and deregulating schools to encourage them to employ a variety of methods to achieve required outcomes. Current efforts include approaches such as decentralized decision-making and experiments with curriculum, instruction, organization of the learning environment, applications of technology, and alternative structures of time, among other things.

More radical solutions being debated and considered in many states include extensive voucher and school-choice programs, and general deregulation of public education. Given the magnitude of these potential changes to public education, we believe it is vital to study how

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educators are reacting to and making meaning out of one of the first state-mandated fundamental reform programs.

Legislators often assume that passing a law is more or less synonymous with solving a problem. However, if the spate of current legislation aimed at encouraging greater innovation and systemic change in education is any indication, legislators seem to perceive that the extensive educational reform programs in the 1980s have been only marginally effective. Legislators' patience with public schools appears to be wearing thin. At the same time, the proportion of funds coming from state, rather than local, sources has increased in many states, due in large measure to lawsuits that successfully challenged existing systems of school finance. With increased responsibility for funding comes increased interest in educational programs and outcomes, interest that was less evident when funding was a primarily local issue.

Our long-term goal in this study is to investigate the degree to which state-driven mandates that require significant local involvement and ownership are translated into practice. We also want to monitor the degree to which the intent and meaning of the legislation are translated, altered, or redirected during this process. We consider the following questions on a continuing basis:

- Can comprehensive legislation create radical restructuring of a state's public education system?
- How do the various interest groups affected by the legislation make meaning out of it?
- Can legislation that creates a statewide accountability framework actually allow for greater local control of the educational program?
- Does such a framework serve to motivate educators to change and/or improve the ways in which they structure and deliver their educational program locally?
- How do these findings relate to the literature on power and organizational change?

In this article, we describe survey results from the first collection and examination of data that gauge teacher and administrator reactions to the act. We do not answer all the questions posed above. Those questions form the context for the larger, longer-term investigation of the phenomenon of systemic school reform in Oregon.

Oregon's Educational Reform Act

No one expected the "Katz Bill" to survive the political process in Oregon's 1991 biennial legislative session. Who would support comprehensive and radical change for Oregon's public schools, particularly in a state where the schools look reasonably good in national comparisons? The unlikely answer to this question was a majority of both legislative houses and the recently elected Governor. They chose to support this comprehensive rethinking of education, so in July 1991 the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century, also known as H.B. 3565, became law. Representative Vera Katz, who sponsored the bill, described it as a "wake-up call for public schools."

Katz received much of her inspiration from her membership on the board of directors of the National Center for Education and the Economy. She participated in the development of the report *America's Choice: High Skills or Low Wages!*, published in 1991 by the center. This report served as the centerpiecefor a significant portion of H.B. 3565.

In November 1990 Oregon voters had passed Measure 5, an initiative to limit property taxes by gradually capping, over a six-year period, the rate at which real property could be taxed and decreasing it. The implications for government in Oregon, where there is no sales tax and where local school districts depended on

property taxes for over 60 percent of their revenues, are profound. When fully implemented in 1996, Measure 5 will cut general fund revenues in half.

Legislators and educational lobbyists were focused on the financial issues surrounding implementation of Measure 5. Their attention was diverted from H.B. 3565, which was being shepherded by the influential Katz. In this environment, H.B. 3565 moved quickly and smoothly through the legislative process, with little fanfare or controversy.

The following summary describes some of the key elements of the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century:

• The intention of the act is to create a "restructured educational system...to achieve the state's goals of the best educated citizens in the nation by the year 2000 and a work force equal to any in the world by the year 2010."

• The act outlines a success-oriented educational system that begins with students who enter kindergarten ready to learn. It establishes as state policy the intention to implement "programs for early childhood education including prenatal care, parenting education, child-parent centers, and...pre-kindergarten programs."

• The use of nongraded primary classrooms, where children of different ages are taught together, is to be explored.

• Middle level education will be studied and plans will be developed "to insure that the school restructuring efforts framed in this Act address the unique learning and developmental needs of the middle educational levels."

• The broader changes are to the high school, where the traditional four-year structure will be broken into two separate programs, the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) and the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM). Every student will have the opportunity to obtain the CIM by age sixteen or the end of tenth grade. To obtain a CIM, a student must demonstrate "the capacity to learn, think, reason, retrieve information and work effectively alone and in groups." Additionally, students must have the "knowledge and skills to read, write, problem solve, think critically and communicate across the disciplines." Assessment must include "a series of performance-based assessments benchmarked to mastery levels at approximately grades 3, 5, 8, and 10 including but not limited to work samples, tests and portfolios... culminating in a project or exhibition that demonstrates attainment of required knowledge and skills."

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• The Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) leads to a college preparatory endorsement, an academic professional technical endorsement, or both, in one of six "broad occupational categories." Mastery must be demonstrated here as well through performance-based means. The requirements for the CAM must be designed to "facilitate the movement between the endorsements and shall encourage choice and mobility so as to enhance a student's opportunities to maximize exposure to the full range of educational experiences."

• The act contains numerous provisions defining how help and assistance will be provided to students who are not succeeding in public education. For students who leave school before receiving a CIM, learning centers will offer "teaching strategies, technology, and curricula that emphasize the latest research and best practice" to help them obtain their CIM.

• Enhanced public accountability for education is achieved through the Oregon Report Card, an increase in standardization visits, local school and district self-evaluations every two years, and increased parental involvement.

• 21st Century Schools Councils are mandated by September 1995 in every school. Teachers will form a majority. These councils' duties are still being defined.

• The act contains provisions for lengthening the school year from 175 days to 185 days in 1996, 200 days in the year 2000, and 220 days by 2010. These provisions are subject to legislative review and research on the likely value of such a change.

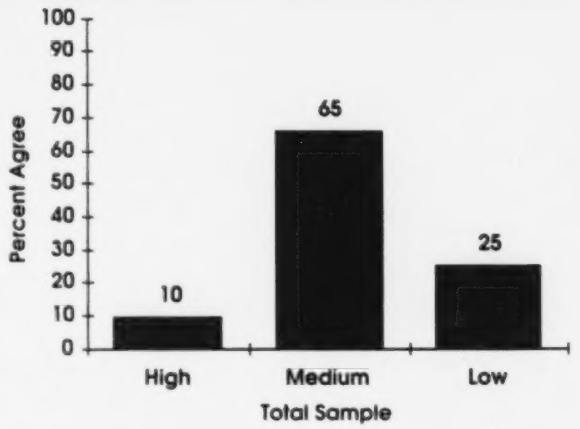
The timelines for implementation stretch out past the end of the decade, but most significant actions take place between 1996 and 1998.

Oregon's school reform differs from others—Kentucky and British Columbia, for instance—in one significant respect. Elsewhere, restructuring efforts emphasize primary education, relying on changes in instructional strategies and student

TABLE 1. Sample Description and Response Rates

District Size (ADM)	No. of Districts in Sample	Surveys Distributed	Surveys Returned	Return Rate
30,000 +	1	225	140	62.2%
10,400 -29,999	2	562	374	66.5
5,000 -10,399	4	504	271	53.8
2,000 - 4,999	4	757	478	63.1
under 2,000	9	390	247	63.3
Case Study Districts (5,000-10,000 ADM)	2	1007	747	74.2
TOTAL	22	3445	2257	65.5%

TABLE 2. Knowledge of the Oregon Educational Act



achievement to work their way upward through the educational system. This is analogous to those school desegregation plans that began with first graders and projected incremental year-by-year progress and gradual acceptance by children and the general public. By contrast, Oregon places special emphasis on secondary education and has, in the CIM and the CAM, developed dramatic departures from past practice. These certificates are awarded on performance, not seat time. This further differentiates Oregon's reform effort. It is outcome-based and success-based, driven by the notion that essentially all students can achieve at high levels if the system is restructured to support success, and if clear terminal outcomes exist to define success. Elements of the new system work downward as elementary and middle schools look specifically to ways in which they can adapt their programs to the requirements of the CIM and the CAM. Hence, Oregon may provide an even stronger test of the potential of state policy to mandate fundamental educational reform.

Study Methodology

We gathered survey data using an eight-page, self-administered questionnaire. It consisted of ninety-nine forced-choice items, one open-ended question, a comments section, three items on personal characteristics, and five items describing the school building and school district. Initial drafts of the survey form were developed by the researchers based on their knowledge of the act, their work with school districts and the Department of Education, and their discussions with teachers and administrators in Oregon schools.

Forced-choice items were grouped in the following areas: (1) knowledge of the act; (2) beliefs about the law's *intent*; (3) assessment of potential *effects*; (4) predictions about likelihood of implementation, including analyses of why it will or won't be implemented; (5) personal reactions, including how much the respondent might have to *change*; (6) what will be required for the law to be implemented; and (7) whether specific provisions will improve student learning.

We mailed questionnaires to (1) teachers and administrators selected randomly from throughout the state; (2) teachers and administrators in two Oregon school districts in which we planned more comprehensive data collection; (3) members of the nine Task Forces established by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to create recommendations to help implement the act; and (4) superintendents and principals from a random sample of Oregon districts. In this article, we report data only from the first two categories. Instruments were distributed, completed, and collected between October 1 and December 15, 1992.

The questionnaire invited respondents to call if they were willing to be interviewed about the act. Approximately thirty did respond and were interviewed either face-to-face or by phone. Quoted comments in the text that follows have been taken from these interviews.

We devised a sampling strategy that roughly corresponded to a stratified random sample of Oregon's schools and at the same time compensated for the state's extreme variance in district size. We also wanted a sample that would allow us to use school districts, individual school buildings, and individual educators as potential units of analysis. Correspondingly, we divided the state's districts into size categories so that the schools and districts in the category would represent their approximate proportion of children

in the state. Within each category we used a table of random numbers to randomly select districts and then schools. Our goal was to have every certified staff member in each school building complete the questionnaire. Educators returned the anonymous completed questionnaires to a drop box in the school office, and either members of the research team picked them up or they were mailed directly to us. The actual sample is described in table 1.

Of the total population upon which the subsequent graphs and analysis are based, approximately 2,140 are teachers or other certified teaching or support staff, and approximately 120 are building-level administrators. The graphs in this article combine the responses of both groups.

Overview of Findings

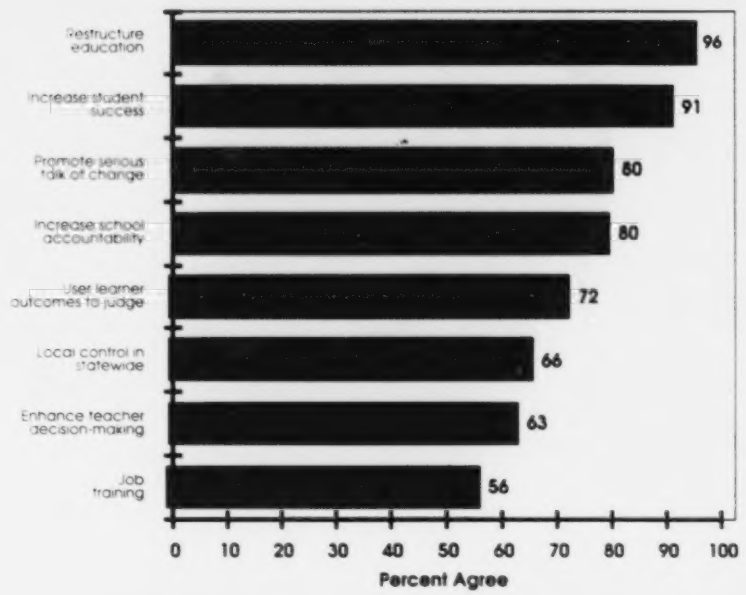
This section presents the results from the eleven survey questions listed below, accompanied by comments from respondents who answered our invitation to call and schedule an interview.

1. How would you characterize your knowledge of the act?

Seventy-five percent of respondents indicated their knowledge of the act was high or medium (table 2). Educators appear to be aware of the law. The Department of Education and others have worked extensively to develop awareness. The question that remains unanswered is whether respondents' knowledge of the law is accurate. Subsequent questions address this point more directly.

The law is complex and multidimensional. Interview data suggest that educators have focused on certain sections of the law, including the certificates of initial and advanced mastery, extended school year, multiage grouping, outcomes-based approach, and apprenticeships and internships. They do not seem to be aware of many of the subtleties of the law that could have as much or more impact than the sections they currently understand.

TABLE 3. Intent of the Act



Knowledge is not necessarily uniformly distributed. Interest varies greatly. Educators described a wide range of reactions to the law:

> People who are retiring in the next couple of years just ignore it and keep doing what they've been doing. At the other extreme are people who are excited about the possibilities that exist now that didn't exist before in educating kids. A real across the board gamut.

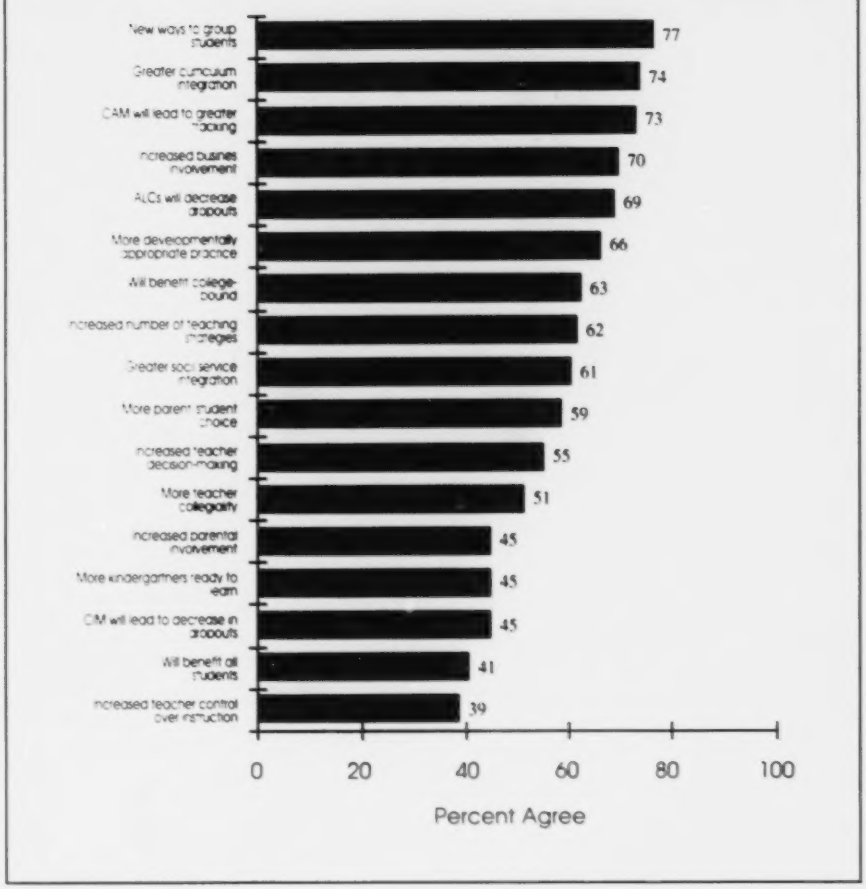
2. What do you believe is the *intent* of the act? Indicate whether you *agree* or *disagree* with each statement:

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they believe the intent of the law is to bring about fundamental change in schools in the form of restructuring, increased student success, increased accountability, and the promotion of serious talk of change (table 3). These results are somewhat different than expected. Many teachers had expressed the concern that the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century was a law designed primarily to provide job training for students in imitation of the European model of education. However, a majority of educators believe that the intent was much broader than that single focus.

3. What do you think the *effect* of the act will be? Indicate whether you *agree* or *disagree* with each statement.

There appears to be concern that in some areas the effect of the law may not be consistent with its intent. A majority or better indicated the law was likely to lead to changes in the ways students are grouped, more curriculum integration, more teaching strategies, more business involvement, greater social service integration into schools, more parental choice, and increased teacher collegiality

TABLE 4. Effect of the Act



(table 4). They also believed that the Certificate of Advanced Mastery would lead to greater tracking, and that the law would benefit the college-bound rather than all students. Most did not believe that the law would result in increased teacher control over instruction.

Many educators believe that, however noble the intent of the legislation, implementation may not necessarily benefit all students, decrease dropouts, or lead to increased control by teachers over instruction. However, when asked later (Question 11) if the specific ideas contained in the law had merit and were likely to lead to improved learning, over two-thirds agreed that almost every aspect of the law would improve learning. There are other indications that educators are skeptical that the state will follow through on the requirements of the law.

Although two-thirds of respondents indicated in the previous question that the intent was to enhance teacher decision-making, and 55 percent indicated in response to this question that the effect of the law would be to increase teacher decision-making, only 39 percent thought that the effect would be to increase teacher control over instruction. In that sense, decision-making was divorced from its effect on instruction. The new vehicle for enhanced teacher decision-making, the mandated site council, was not necessarily perceived as a tool for increasing teacher control over instruction in the classroom.

4. How likely do you think it is that the act will be implemented more or less as-is?

Fifty-seven percent of respondents believe it was at least moderately likely the law would be implemented more or less as-is (table 5). Funding issues, especially for such specific sections as extended school year, preschool programs, and integration of social services, clearly depressed this figure. These results also dispel the belief that educators were in total denial. As responses to the next question indicate, most felt that the elements of the law with the greatest potential to effect large-scale change were fairly likely to be implemented.

5. How likely do you think it is that the following sections will be implemented?

When asked about specific sections of the law, an overwhelming majority thought it was highly or moderately likely that sections such as the Certificate of Initial Mastery, site-based decision-making, Certificate of Advanced Mastery, increased accountability measures, and alternative learning centers would be put into place (table 6). Extended school year was seen as least likely to come about, at least in part due to the costs associated with it. Educators differentiate between those aspects of the law that require considerable funding and those that may not require new resources.

6. If you believe the act will be implemented, why do you think it *will be implemented*? (Choose all that apply)

Nearly 60 percent thought the law would be implemented because the current system isn't working for many kids (table 7). Fifty-six percent indicated it was time

TABLE 5. Extent of Implementation of the Act

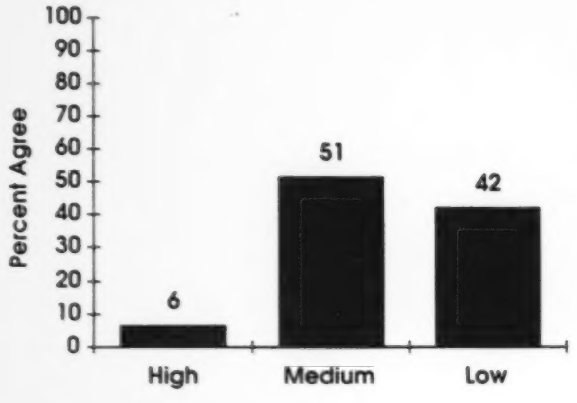
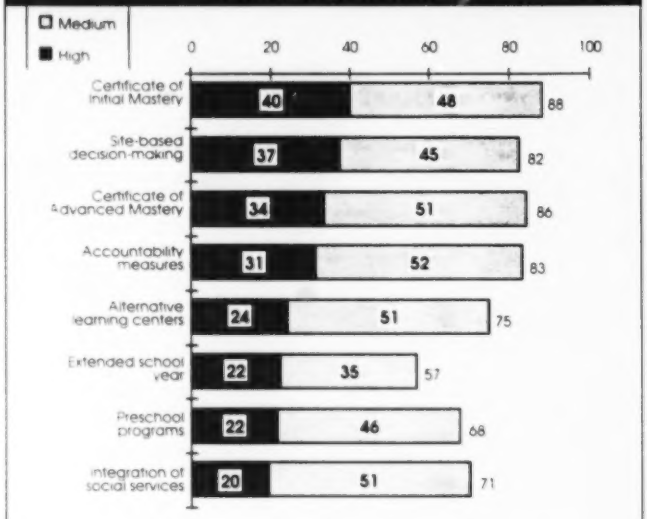


TABLE 6. Elements with High and Medium Likelihood of Being Implemented



for fundamental change in education, and 53 percent thought the law would be implemented because educators are committed to doing what's best for kids. Forty-nine percent thought the law would be implemented because the business community is demanding changes in education. Only 30 percent thought schools were already doing much of what is in the law.

These results are interesting in that they suggest many Oregon educators currently believe that it may be time for fundamental change. Commonly held perceptions of educator attitudes, and the results from research conducted at some schools engaged in restructuring activities, suggest considerable educator resistance to fundamental change in education. Respondents here indicated much more agreement that the system is not working in important ways, and that fundamental change may be needed to get it working again.

Although 49 percent thought the reason the law would be implemented because the business community is demanding change, only 33 percent thought such change would be in response to parental demands. This response is consistent with reports from schools or systems involved in change that indicate parents, while highly interested in the conditions affecting their children, rarely take a leading role in calling for change generally.

A number of the interview participants felt particularly strongly about the need for change of a fundamental nature:

TABLE 7. Reasons for Implementation of the Act

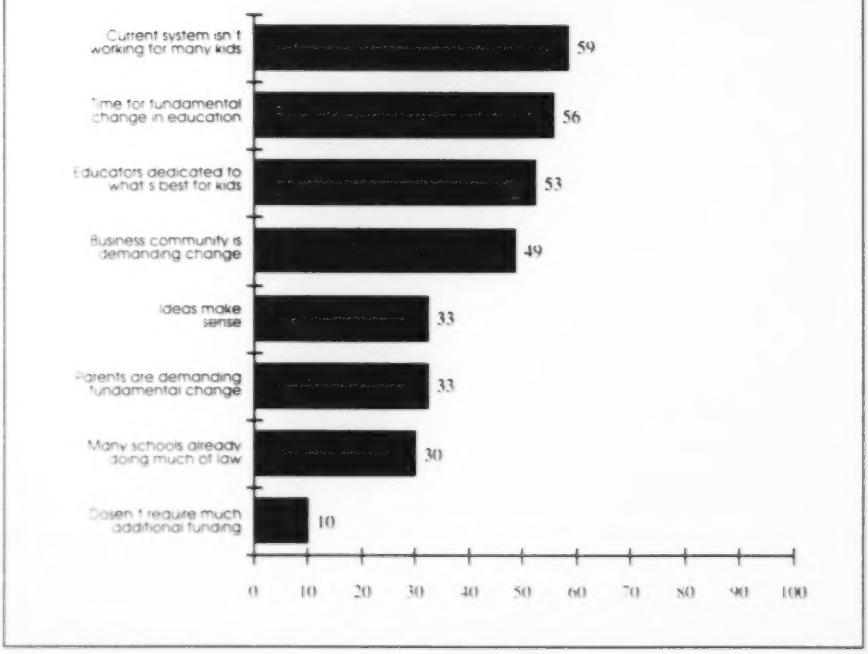


TABLE 8. Reasons for Not Implementing the Act

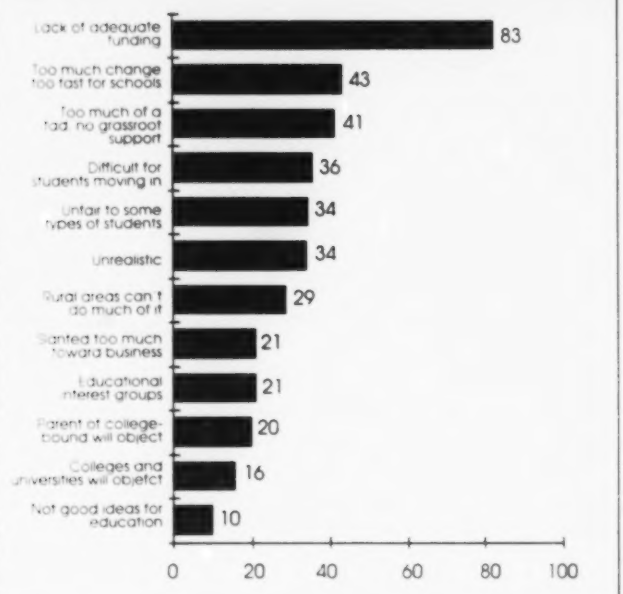
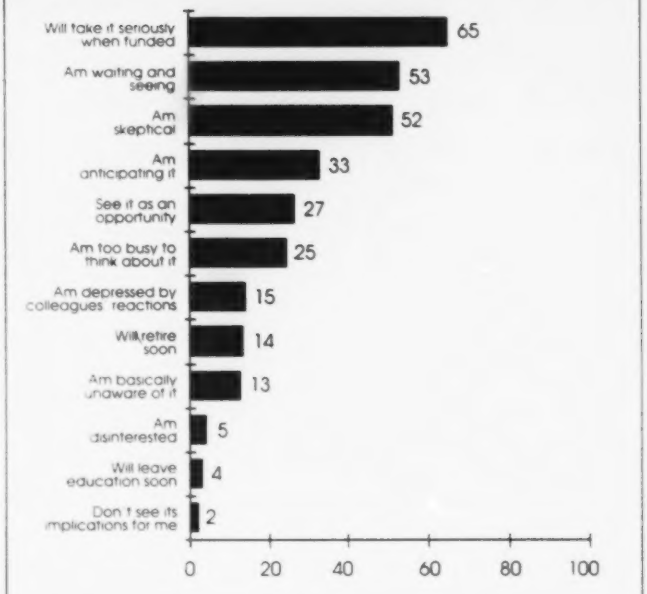


TABLE 9. Personal Reactions to the Act



Personally I believe we have needed for a long time to take a look at what we've done, because it hasn't worked for a real large proportion of your kids. The students that are not college bound have for years said, "I just go to school until I put in my time, and get the diploma so I can go out and get a job and learn what I need to learn to do things." There has been a discrepancy about what we tell them they need to know and what they actually need to know when they get out of school. They have lost faith that what we tell them is really what is important.

Not every respondent felt that the problem was in the system. At least one interviewee felt that the problems lay elsewhere:

> The biggest problem I have is getting students to do what I ask them to do. And since I was involved in the legislation at the national level last year, we had one question that was asked: "If students did three hours of homework each night, would the system be broken?" and the answer is "no." So, it comes down to consequences for not doing the work, or getting C's and D's, and there are not consequences. One-third of our students are at risk, families are changing, and yet we still need to make students and staff more accountable for success.

7. If you believe the act will *not be implemented*, why do you think it *won't be implemented*? (Choose all that apply)

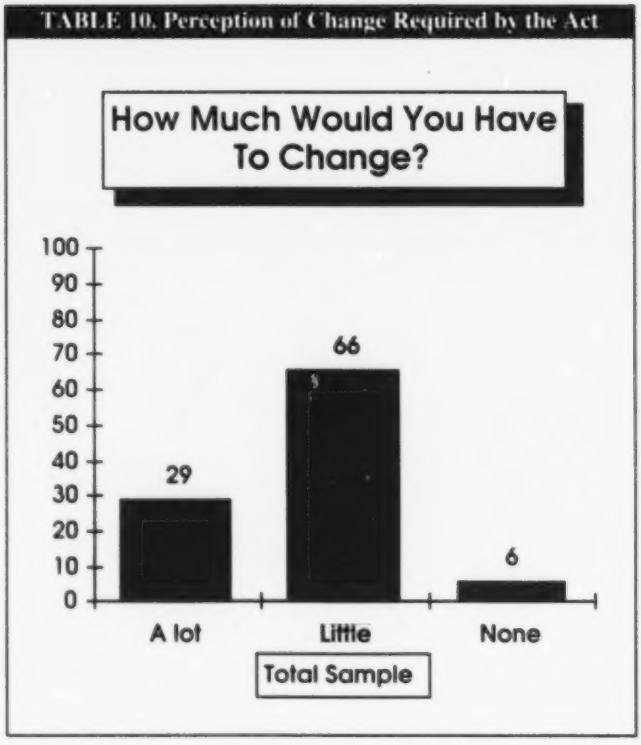
Educators saw lack of adequate funding as the most likely reason that the law wouldn't be implemented (table 8). Only 10 percent thought the ideas were not good for education. The dropoff was steep beyond agreement that funding was an essential element of successful implementation.

Relatively few educators believed that the law would not be implemented for many of the reasons that had been expressed vocally during initial discussions after passage of the law. Reasons voiced at that time included concerns that the ideas in the bill were not sound educational policy, that colleges and universities would object, that the parents of college-bound students would be concerned about their child having a nonstandard high school experience or transcript, that the law was aimed too much at meeting the needs of the business community, and that rural areas would be disadvantaged. Others raised fears that special needs students would not be treated fairly under the law.

Responses here indicate that most educators seemed to believe that these factors were not necessarily highly significant obstacles to implementation. However, our instrument may not have captured the intensity of feeling that might be present on the part of some of those who objected to specific provisions of the law.

8. What is your *personal reaction* to the act? (Choose all that apply)

TABLE 10. Perception of Change Required by the Act



When considering their personal reactions to the law, educators indicated they were highly aware of the act and of its implications for them, but that they have adopted a "wait and see" attitude (table 9). They have engaged mentally, are aware of the need, and in many cases desirability, of fundamental change in education, but are waiting to be provided the resources and support necessary to be successful dealing with a large-scale overhaul of the educational system.

At the same time, few respondents indicated they are uninterested or are unaware of its implications. Educators appear to be tracking the law carefully and withholding judgment pending further actions by legislative leaders and department of education personnel. There appears to be a core of supporters—somewhere between a quarter and a third—who are anticipating the law and see it as an opportunity to do things they have always wanted to do. If this is true, this group might represent the "critical mass" for change often discussed by change implementors. The existence of such a group suggests the wisdom of strategies that cultivate, nurture, and utilize these people in any systematic implementation program.

It also seems unlikely that those who are "waiting and seeing" will do so indefinitely. If the resources and means necessary for them to respond to the requirements of the law are not forthcoming, cynicism may become the dominant perception of ambitious legislative programs that lack concomitant resources.

Interview participants described a wide range of reactions by their colleagues to the act. One high school teacher presented this characterization of how her large suburban school was reacting:

> Probably with apprehension. Basically, a lack of a full understanding of what it means. And I think you could probably break that into those people who teach required courses and who would say, "I'm supposed to deliver eleventh-grade history by the tenth grade. What happened to eleventh-grade history?" I think it's being met a little more positively by those people in the elective areas... I hear both positives and negatives, but the negatives are emanating more from "How are you going to deliver this?"

9. If the act is implemented, *how much* do you believe *you would have to change* what you do and the way you do it?

Just under 30 percent of teachers believed they would need to change a lot if the law is implemented (table 10). Two-thirds thought they would have to change a little. It is interesting how few think they would not have to change at all. Once again, educators are aware that this law will have implications, sometimes profound, for them. But if the act *does* require massive change, this has not been accepted by the majority of educators.

10. For the act to be implemented successfully, *how important* are the following prerequisites (see table 11)?

Respondents thought time for staff development was as important as fully funding the law (table 11). Funding and staffing may be a synonymous concern. They indicated smaller class sizes were important, along with more information to parents and teachers, restructured teacher and administrator preparation programs, and buy-in by the business community. Only 42 percent felt that extending the timelines contained in the law to provide more time for implementation was most important to implementing the law successfully. We wonder whether this means a large proportion of educators share the sense of urgency of visible, vocal reformers.

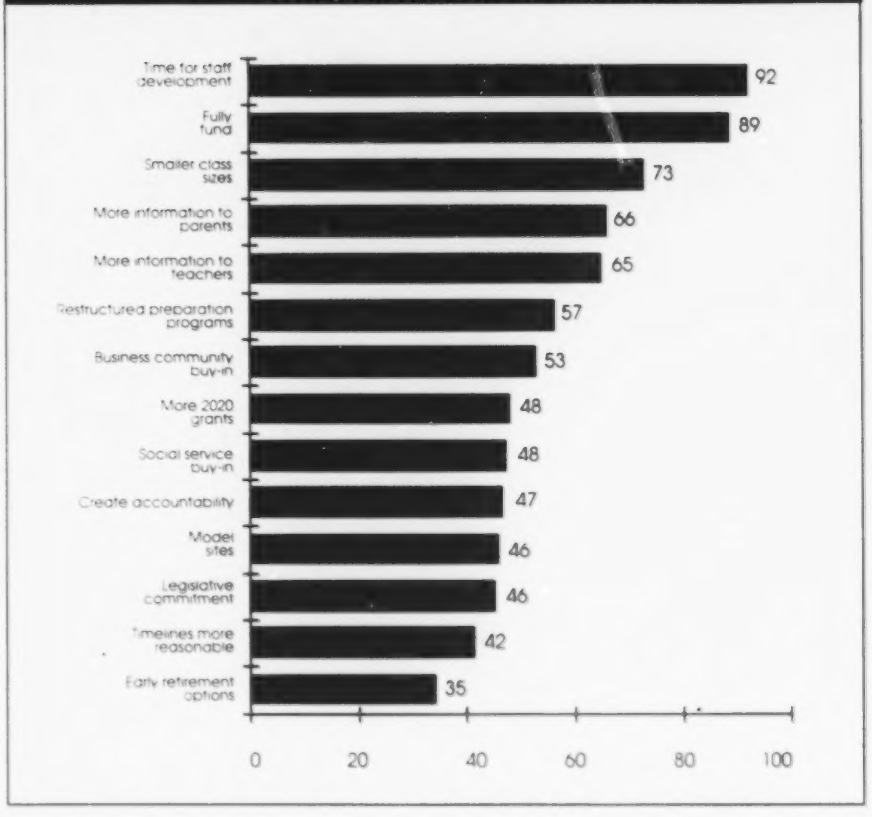
Even if issues of funding and time are set aside for a moment, educators believe they need more support in a number of other ways if they are to attempt large-scale change successfully. They indicate the need for more information, restructured preparation programs, business community buy-in, support from the department of education in the form of demonstration grants, and buy-in by social service agencies.

11. Do you *agree* or *disagree* that the following elements of the act *will lead to improved student learning* if implemented?

Over 80 percent of responding educators thought that alternative learning centers, full funding of preschool, social services at schools, and developmentally appropriate practices would improve student learning (table 12). Recall, however, that these are the elements they doubt will be implemented. Over two-thirds agreed that increased accountability and the Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery were likely to lead to improved student learning. Only 35 percent thought that extending the school year would have the desired effect of improving student learning.

The three most-preferred choices (alternative learning centers, full funding of preschool programs, and social services at schools) are all programs that provide support to teachers directly or indirectly. At the same time, they tend to move responsibility for learning (or failure to learn) to other agencies. These responses perhaps indicate a sense by educators that they are doing all they can to educate students within the current model, and that more improvement will come primarily as a result of additional services external to the classroom (and the school, to some extent).

TABLE 11. Prerequisites for Successful Implementation



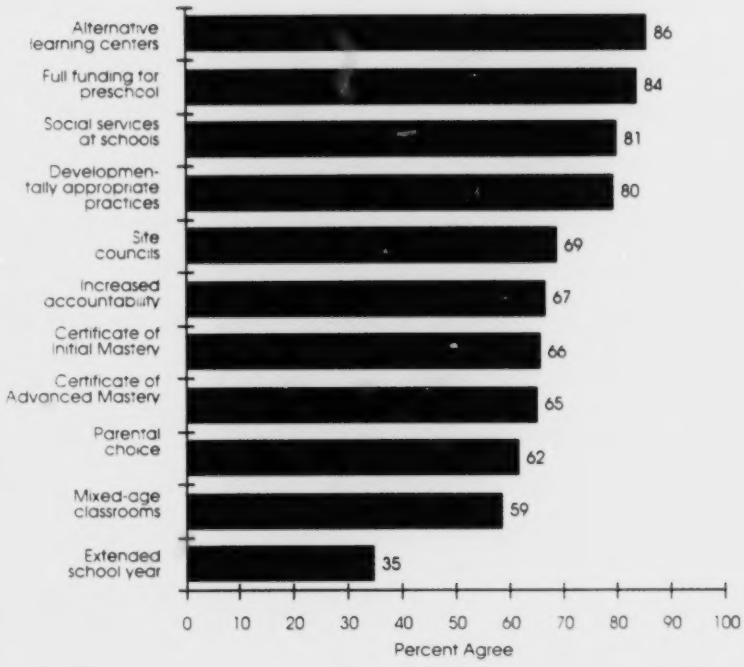
Discussion

In general, the results indicate that many Oregon educators may be receptive to the idea of large-scale change in education *if* it is funded properly and *if* they are given adequate time to develop necessary new skills. This finding is somewhat surprising, given that the act was a "top-down" reform with little educator involvement in its development. The provision of resources is uncertain, and there are real questions about whether policy-makers will have the political will to see these laws through to their ultimate implementation.

Oregon educators appear to dislike the ambiguity and confusion the act and Measure 5 have brought to their job expectations and responsibilities. Responses indicate some frustration and fear that the process of implementing this law will not necessarily lead to its desired and intended outcomes. They do not, however, appear to have rejected its central goals and methods. This is a real danger because previous research on the change process and on implementation of innovations suggested top-down change is less likely to be effective if those who must implement it have not been involved in its development, do not take ownership of it, and cannot adapt it to their local needs (Fullan and Miles 1992, Fullan with Stiegelbauer 1991). Our findings suggest that state legislatures may be able to jump-start school restructuring by creating frameworks within which the discussion of fundamental change and the construction of specific responses take place.

It is possible that the Legislature's top-down approach resulted in the development of a framework for change that did not violate the perceptions and values of many of those educators who will have to implement the changes. One of the strengths of the act may have been its lack of specific prescriptive or mandatory practices. The law instead created a number of mechanisms, such as the Certificates of Initial and Advanced Mastery, local site councils, accountability and reporting requirements for schools, reviews of middle-level practice, and

TABLE 12. Anticipated Contribution to Improved Student Learning



examination of mixed-age grouping strategies, without stating in any detail how these ideas should be put into practice.

This lack of detail has created massive uncertainty among educators, many of whom have become comfortable functioning as "street level bureaucrats" (Lipsky 1980), concerned more with interpreting rules than solving problems. At the same time, it has empowered and challenged them to reinvent education. Rather than simply complaining, many teachers and administrators have been engaged in a conversation to determine how education might be recast within the broad frameworks the law provides. This approach is in contrast to British Columbia and Kentucky, where the state was highly prescriptive regarding many elements of reform, and educators were reduced to the role of implementors, not creators or interpreters.

However, it is not clear that Oregon educators fully understand, or have internalized, the potential impact of the prospective changes. Since there is great ambiguity surrounding the precise meaning and implications of various sections of the law, people are able to make their own interpretations, which is both an advantage and a disadvantage. If such interpretations lead to localized solutions with high degrees of ownership, reform will be supported. If they allow people to believe that they need simply to adapt their current practices incrementally, radical reform will be converted into small adaptations of existing practice. This reexamination of premises and practices requires time combined with systematic support and external expertise. It is not unreasonable for educators to expect to be given the tools and capacity to remake themselves and their schools if there is an emerging social expectation that education be restructured.

The concerns educators have regarding funding and time appear to be reasonable under the circumstances. In fact, the receptivity to change and to elements of the act is much higher than might be expected in the environment of fiscal crisis brought on by Measure 5. Perhaps the specter of massive change created by the conjunction of Measure 5 and the act has loosened the system somewhat and increased the receptivity of some educators to the notion that the only way out of a seemingly inescapable dilemma is through reexamination of longstanding beliefs and practices. The evolution of school reform in the context of large-scale tax restructuring should be closely examined to determine the effects of the confounding influences between the two. There are indications that other states may link changes in education finance to fundamental education reform, as Kentucky did consciously, and Oregon did unintentionally. Such linkages may have powerful, unanticipated effects on policy implementation.

Educators continue to receive what they feel are ambiguous messages regarding the interest in and goals of reform. Business leaders support change but not tax increases to fund such change. Parents bemoan education nationally, but local interest groups oppose most changes proposed in local school districts. Educators talk of the need for change until a specific proposal is made that might compel them to alter their own practices. Policy-makers seem unable to articulate and sustain a consistent direction that can span several legislative sessions. Resources are promised but never delivered. Various educational agencies offer conflicting interpretations of the intent and requirements of a law, based on their interest positions. This ambiguity tends to cause educators to freeze, to wait until

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

1. In general, educators seem to have a positive attitude toward the concepts included in the Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century.
2. Respondents do not seem convinced that the intent and effect of the law will necessarily be highly congruent. They seem to be concerned over a loss of control at the local level, and over a refocusing of the goals of education toward work force preparation and the needs of the business community.
3. The law appears to contain many programs and approaches that are philosophically consistent with educator belief systems and perceptions of what constitutes effective educational practice.
4. Educators are skeptical that the state will follow through on the aims and mandates of this law. Specifically, they believe that funding is unlikely to accompany those sections that require additional resources. At the same time, there appears to be substantial opportunity to continue the restructuring process if educators become convinced that they will be able to be successful.
5. There are indicators that many more educators are ready for large-scale change than are commonly believed to be. To be received positively, however, such change must lead to a decrease in educator frustration and an increase in educators' perceived sense of efficacy.
6. Responses varied little among the different subgroups in terms of district size, location, age or gender of respondent, level of school, and so forth. Conventional wisdom regarding educators would have suggested that certain geographical areas, grade levels, and respondents of particular ages and gender would show significantly different response patterns. This did not turn out to be the case.
7. Some major differences were noted from district to district and, particularly, between and among school buildings. These differences bear further investigation to determine if there are specific identifiable microfactors that affect perceptions and attitudes toward educational reform and restructuring within buildings.

there is some clarity of direction and assurance of success before they launch into large-scale changes with all their attendant risks and costs.

The lack of common meaning of terms in the act contributes to this confusion. As noted earlier, the creation of common meaning and sense of direction may be just as important as any specific provision of the law. In addition to its specific provisions, there is an overarching vision of education embedded in the act. The creation of common understanding and definition of this vision remains an important and unfulfilled task. Educators appear unlikely to approach reform from an integrated, vision-driven perspective until some of their underlying concerns about the potential success of their efforts are addressed, and until the vision is articulated clearly enough to allow them to ascertain its effects on them personally. Education reform involves making meaning on a number of levels simultaneously, from the policy level to the personal level. This appears to be an iterative process whereby educators are shaping the policy framework to their world view of what is possible and desirable. New interpretations of the law are then offered to make the law consonant with the emerging understanding and acceptance put forth by educators.

The issue of resources must be considered as well. Resources comprise time, money (primarily for release time and training activities), and access to expertise. Implementation issues were not addressed in the law, which envisioned a two-year planning period before such efforts began. Two years will have passed in June 1993 and there still is no clear plan for implementation at a state level or in any more than a handful of the state's 295 school districts. The key question is whether educational restructuring must be driven by new resources specifically targeted to the requirements imposed on school districts, by a reallocation of existing resources, or by some combination of the two.

Most educators are assuming that they can restructure their practice only if provided new resources above and beyond what they already receive. Laying aside for the moment the political problems that attend this notion, it also does not take into consideration the fact that if fundamental change takes place, some practices will cease and others will be structured in radically different ways. This implies a reallocation of existing resources. This survey suggests that few educators are thinking in terms of resource reallocation, though no item addressed this issue specifically. Even supporters of the law commented in interviews that they felt it would be possible to implement the law because much of it did not require additional resources, not that existing resources would or should be reallocated.

Time is perhaps the key resource essential to school restructuring. The state could create time for reform without incurring expense by mandating early release days or other vehicles of a similar nature. Once again, this issue is not addressed by the law and has not been resolved in the year and a half of planning

subsequent to the law's passage. In fact, there are no proposals currently being considered at any level to create systematically the time to allow educators to design new programs and to develop the new skills necessary to respond to the law's expectations.

Further, expertise is required to make time count. Few schools currently possess the capacity to transform themselves. Most depend on outside sources to guide and inform them in even the most rudimentary adaptations of their programs. Oregon schools are being asked to transform practice without being provided systematic access to the expertise necessary to proceed. Such expertise need not be in the form of trainers solely. Equally important is expertise that enables a school to take control of the change process, to create, develop, and sustain an internal capacity for change. Capacity-building resources have not been marshaled on a statewide basis for Oregon schools.

Can state-level legislation transform public education? The Oregon data suggest that educators may be more willing to change if they perceive the ideas themselves to be educationally sound; if they are able to adapt the broad policy framework of the mandate to their particular situation; if there is sufficient clarity about what they are expected to do; if there are reasonable assurances that the political climate will be stable enough for the mandates to remain in force long enough to be implemented thoroughly; and if they are provided the resources of money, time, and expertise in a manner that enables them to develop and sustain the internal capacity for change.

Oregon's educational reform act does not address all these issues. However, it has served as a "wake-up call" for the state's educators and for many segments of the public. With its extended implementation timelines, the law provides opportunities for policy-makers and implementors to address the issues raised above. We intend to continue our observations and analysis of this process to determine the ultimate fate of this and other state-level calls for local school restructuring.

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